

The Ramtop

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Later Winter

1997



**Apple's Newton vs. Pilot
More on Juno
1997 Computer Show
Greg's Tech Tips**

THE 1997 NORTH AMERICAN SINCLAIR SHOW

Here are the details for the 1997 North American QL Show in Bedford, PA. By my calculations this is the 5th one since Bob Dyl started the first one. It is a unique experience for QL enthusiasts in North America to meet many of the most prominent people in the QL world. It is always surprising how many people from all over the US and Canada and Europe continue to meet each year. This is a invitation to all people interested the QL and Sinclair computers to join us. This year the show will be in the town of Bedford in the state of Pennsylvania.

An attempt was made to move it further west than it has been to make it easier for people in the South and Midwest to easily drive to the show. Although Bedford is on an interstate exit this is basically a rural area. There is no public transportation but the restaurant is within walking distance of the suggested motel.

Date of the Show : Saturday May 3, 1997 located at the Carriage House Restaurant at Exit 11 off the I-70 & I-76 in Bedford, Pennsylvania, Phone : (814) 623-1174. Bedford is about half way between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh on Interstates I-70 & I-76. Time of the show : 9 AM - 4pm

The show will include talks and demonstrations by well known QL personalities and sales by a number of vendors Including : Frank Davis of FWD Computing USA , Stuart Honeyball of Miracle Systems England and Jochen Merz of Jochen Merz Software Germany. The show will take place in the main dining room of the restaurant and lunch is included in admission to the show. After the show a banquet will be held at the same restaurant at 6 PM Saturday evening. All the newest QL hardware and software will be there to see and purchase. Including the QPC - The QL emulator that runs on a PC; the QXL2 Card - The fast hardware emulator for PC; the Q-emuLator - The QL emulator for the Mac. Also there will be lots hardware and software for Sinclair computers. Part of the show will include online demonstrations using both QL and PC equipment.

Admission Fees : \$12 per person if you notify Bill Cable in advance \$15 per person at the door. This includes admission to the show and LUNCH and general refreshments throughout the day.

Recommended Motel : Super 8 Motel, Business Rte 220 N., Bedford, PA 15551, Phone : (814) 623-5880 FAX : (814) 623-5880 At Exit 11 of the I-70 & I-76 Interstate at Bedford. Rates : Double occupancy with one double bed \$40.91 Double occupancy with 2 separate beds \$44.72 When you make your reservation mention Bill Cable and the QL show to get this special rate. The rate is per day. There are 57 units, Exercise equipment, HBO, Free local calls, waterbeds, children under 12 free.

Recommended Airports : DULLES International Airport Washington, DC , whic is about 2 1/2 hours by car from Bedford. Pittsburgh and Harrisburg Airports are both about 2 hours by car to Bedford.

There will be a dinner gathering 6 PM Friday night also at the Carriage House Restaurant. We may be able to set up some equipment and have some demonstrations at that time.

Those flying in to airports and needing rides to the show please contact Bill Cable and every attempt will be made to connect you with a local QL person going to the show who can meet you and give you a ride. Likewise, QL people driving to the show who would like to give a ride to a QL enthusiast from far away please contact Bill Cable. This North American QL show. It is being sponsored by NESQLUG (The New England Sinclair Users Group) and all details are being handled by : **Bill Cable NESQLUG Director RR3 Box 92 Cornish, NH 03745 USA Phone : (603) 675-2218 E-mail : cable@cyberportal.net.com**

Newton Past and Future.

by Ron Hopkins-Lutz

Many people are wondering about the advisability of purchasing a new or used Newton as an adjunct to their desktop computer. As a long time Newton user let me give an overview of why a Newton can be a good idea, when it isn't, and what the true costs for a new or used Newton are.

The Newton, from Apple Computer, is now in it's fourth generation and represents a mature product with excellent software support, numbering over 1,700 programs. There is much shareware as well as commercial software, to perform every function from scheduling to imitating a Star Trek Tricorder.

Essentially the Newton is a one pound handheld personal computer (HPC), also called a personal digital assistant (PDA). Apple calls them Message Pads. It is about the size of a reporter's notepad and uses HWR (Hand Writing Recognition) instead of a mini-keyboard. The models range from the original message pad (OMP) with 640kb of RAM which sells for about \$75 used to the newest model MP2000 and eNote which will retail for about \$1,000.

A Newton quickly becomes a constant companion, used for taking notes, calling up information, and entertaining you in the odd waiting room. The built in HWR is somewhat erratic in the earlier models but the MP110 gets fairly reliable as are later models. Third party software can increase speed to that of a good keyboard and 100% accuracy. The built in software provides excellent time management, note taking, and address book functions. Internal organization and intelligence are designed to be transparent while providing maximum help to the user. Truly they function more naturally and yet more powerfully than a Day runner or Franklin Planner.

These are powerful machines, but some cautions are in order. If you do a lot of word processing as opposed to note taking, this is not the machine for you unless you get the very newest model. Similarly telecommunications are weak so again, except for the newest model, don't bother.

One area the Newtons shine in is information retrieval. Shareware and commercial programs are easily available to create Newton Books and Paperbacks. These are cross indexed information resources that can include illustrations, an index, etc. They use the Newtons built in Assistant and Find functions to allow large amounts of data to be stored and easily retrieved. For example I keep a copy of the Qur'an on mine on a PC card for religious study. I created it myself with a simple text file and a shareware program.

Battery life is much shorter than a simple pocket organizer. In general you need to add about \$125 on to the cost of any model Newton for a memory card of 2-4mb and a transfer cable. You'll also need to download a little shareware to do data transfer, or pop \$100 for Apple's very good connection kit.

If you're looking for a small and lightweight computer that can provide excellent time management functions and run a decent time on batteries a new or used Newton is a great tool. But don't expect full sized desktop functionality.

New Virus Targets Excel Spreadsheets

A macro virus that infects Microsoft Excel versions 5 and 6 operating on Windows 3.x, NT, and 95 platforms has recently been discovered. Called Excel Macro.Laroux, it behaves much like the now-common Word macro virus, Word.Concept. The new virus, Excel Macro.Laroux, can travel with e-mail attachments (if Excel spreadsheets are attached to e-mail), over networks, or any other way that Excel spreadsheets travel. Like Concept, the Laroux virus does not intentionally cause damage to the systems it infects; however, it may cause unintentional damage in a small percentage of machines infected. There are solutions for dealing with it, by NCSA. You should also be able to find information in it through the Alte Vista or Deja News search engines on the Web. I haven't checked the Microsoft BBS to see if they have anything on it either.

VIRUS ALERT!

Computer users beware of these new
computer viruses:

Speed Virus: Puts a bomb on your Local Bus and threatens to detonate it if it goes below 50 megabits per second.

Captain Kirk Virus: Your computer. Talks. In short. Sentences. And you don't know why.

Pentium Virus: A stealthing virus that creates numerical errors and then tries to hide them.

Baseball Virus: Asks the user for more money before it will run.

Gump Virus: You take apart your computer to find nothing but a box of chocolates inside.

O.J. Simpson Virus: You turn on every monitor in the lab and notice that his picture is on every one.

Energizer Virus: Once this virus is executed it keeps going and going and going...

Laboratory Scientist Virus: Runs an experiment that turns your mouse into a rat.

Bob Villa Virus: Rebuilds your home directory into a multi-level condo.

Oprah Winfrey Virus: Your 200MB hard drive suddenly shrinks to 80MB, and then slowly expands back to 200MB.

Paul Revere Virus: This revolutionary virus does not horse around. It warns you of impending hard disk attack --- once if by LAN, twice if by C:\.

Politically Correct Virus: Never calls itself a "virus", but instead refers to itself as an "electronic microorganism."

Ted Turner Virus: Colorizes your monochrome monitor.

Arnold Schwarzenegger Virus: Terminates and stays resident. It'll be back.

Dan Quayle Virus: There is something wrong with your computer, we just can't figure it out yet!

Government Economist Virus: Nothing works, but all your diagnostic software says everything is fine.

Federal Bureaucrat Virus: Divides your hard disk into hundreds of little units, each of which does practically nothing, but all of which claim to be the most important part of your computer.

Texas Virus: Makes sure that it's bigger than any other file.

Congressional Virus: The computer locks up, screen splits erratically with a message appearing on each half blaming the other side for the problem.

Airline Virus: You're in Dallas, but your data is in Singapore.

Freudian Virus: Your computer becomes obsessed with marrying its own motherboard.

PBS Virus: Your programs stop every few minutes to ask for money.

Elvis Virus: Your computer gets fat, slow and lazy, then self destructs; only to resurface at shopping malls and service stations across rural America.

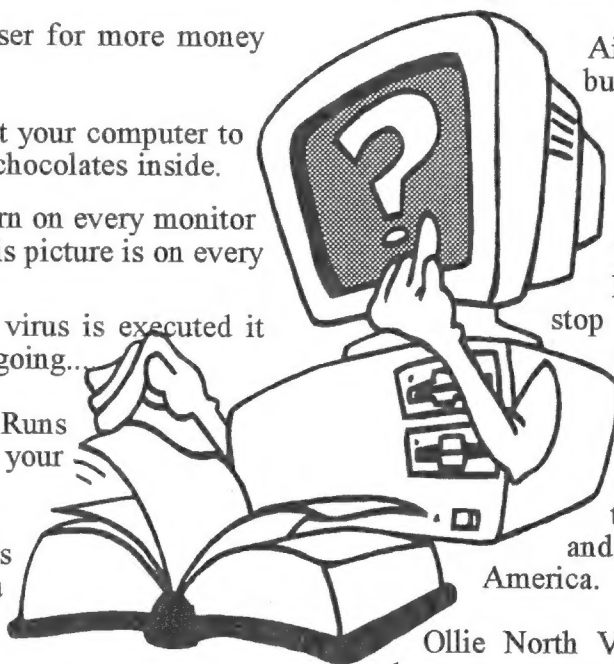
Ollie North Virus: Causes your printer to become a paper shredder.

Jimmy Hoffa Virus: Your programs can never be found again.

Imelda Marcos Virus: Sings you a song (slightly off key) on boot up, then subtracts money from your Quicken account and spends it all on expensive shoes it purchases through Prodigy.

Health Care Virus: Tests your system for a day, finds nothing wrong, and sends you a bill for \$4,500.

LAPD Virus: It claims it feels threatened by the other files on your PC and erases them in "self defense."



The Toshiba Saga Continues....

By Greg Dupuy

Hi to you all! If you will remember from my previous article, I have had a real time with Toshiba and my notebook computer. To give you a brief recap, I purchased a Tecra 710CDT which at that time, (June 6, 96), was the latest and the greatest. It was a total desktop replacement and even without the docking unit or port replicator, could do virtually anything a desk unit could do. I used it for about a month and 3 weeks when it died. I called Toshiba and was told to take it to Micro Center. I did this and they had it for 2 months. In that 2 months they replaced a hard drive (a very short procedure since it only requires flipping a door down and pulling it out and pushing a new one in!)

They did a very poor win95 install. I also found the next day that they had done physical damage to the case. (a gouge in the plastic) Toshiba then said to ship it to Central Telecom in Kansas. They were suppose to have it for a week. That turned into a month. I got it back with the case fixed but still not set up properly. It then went to Richard's Computers in Atlanta GA. To their credit, They did get it back to be in a week and it did work.

The only thing is, it only worked for 13 days. Just long enough to load a bunch of software and lose it again! I shipped it back to them and told them I needed it fixed right and fast. They told me that they thought there was a software problem. They reformatted the hard drive and replaced the system PCB. I got it back after a week and a half. It did not boot the first time out of the box. I shipped it back the same night with a note saying I wanted it replaced ASAP! After a week, I finally go hold of a Toshiba customer rep.

Now it has been about 4 1/2 months since it first went to Micro Center. The Toshiba rep conceded that the computer would have to be replaced. The problem was that the 710 was no longer being made and I suspect this was the case with the 720 also. The 720 came out shortly after I got mine. Toshiba wanted to give me a refurbished 720! I told them NO WAY! I spent \$5800 big ones and that was NOT for a refurb unit! After a day or so, they called me back and said they were sending me a new Tecra 730CDT. I was agreeable to this. I did request that they run it for a while and be sure that it was OK as I did not want to go through this mess again!

They agreed. True to form though, it took somewhat longer than expected and I did not get it until Dec. 20, 96. So far it has been working fine with a couple exceptions. After a few days of usage. I found that I had a bad pixel on the screen. It is not really a problem, just a bit aggravating. The other problem is that it has locked up a few times but it has always rebooted with no problem. I suspect this is due to some software problem though. The only thing I really don't like about this unit is the higher resolution screen. It is a 1024 X 768 at a color depth of 65.536. You might think this is very nice and if you have really good eyes, you would be right. The advantage to this screen is that you can get more on it. You can have more of a document shown and more icons on the desktop. Desktop publishing is nicer since you can see more of the document. The down side is as follows:

1-The images look much smaller.

2- You can not have 24 bit color on the screen.

3- Those programs that must work in a 640 X 480 screen will work but even though the physical size of the screen is 12.1", you see a small screen in the middle which is 6 to 7 inches diagonal. Now if you have the 800 X 600 screen as I had in the first notebook, you are able to have 24 bit color on the screen and you can still have most of the benefits of the larger screen. A 640 X 480 screen is now larger and easier to see. Take it from me, the 800 X 600 is better!

Anyway, after 5 months of not having a usable computer, I am grateful to have a computer that is at this point working well. The new computer has a hard drive that is twice as large as the other one and a 150 Pentium instead of a 133. It also has that higher resolution screen but I feel that is a detriment. Let's hope this one KEEPS working!

JUNO, A USER'S EXPERIENCE

by Ron Hopkins-Lutz

You probably read the information about Juno, the Email service, in the last issue. I've used Juno since late June when the software finally came in the mail. I like the service very much and for some things it is my main Email address. That's ronhl@juno.com for those interested. Here are some brief notes on what it's actually been like to use it.

- It actually is free.
- The ads aren't intrusive. Sometimes you only notice them as they flash off. They are in a little box in the upper right corner and take less than 10% of the screen space. If you click on them you get a larger and more detailed version.
- The ads indeed match some of my interests based on the profile I filled out when signing up. I actually look at a fair number because of that.
- You cannot attach a file but you can paste a text file or a previously UUE encoded file from a text editor or if you have Win95 directly from Explorer. I don't know how large a file the mailbox accepts but I've sent out 20kb files to editors.
- They don't sell your individual address or member profile. That being said they do sell the group profiles, that is that description of how many people are skiers, interested in movies, etc. to sell ad space.
- If you give them permission they will provide information to advertisers on your individual profile, but only if you tell them to.
- There is a lot of junk mail. This is getting to be a problem everywhere and has nothing to do with Juno. Their member address directory is available online from most of the "white pages" web sites whether they publish it or not. However it's only a keystroke to get rid of it.

- The connection is fast and everything is done offline. mail and any new ads transfer at the max your modem and phone line can handle. They compress the information at their end and the software decompresses it. So it is a small packet. You can send mail right away or later.

- The software is very nice. It has a good spell checker, which is not really as common in Email programs, or at least free ones, as it might be. Things are clear and it's actually hard to goof it up.

- It is about 25% larger than regular Email programs, taking about 2-3mb.

- There is a way to remove the ad cache. It involves editing a file and then you have to remove the contents of several subdirectories but not the subdirectories themselves. Unless you have a small hard drive the 1 to 1.5mb you save may not be worth it as you have to keep doing it as new ads are transferred.

- Anything you can do by Email it will do. - It doesn't have kill files. - It has user folders and mail is easy to move to a folder, forward, etc. - They handle mailing lists you create well.

There is an option you can turn on to have either the sender or all recipients added to the address book fully automatically. This is handy if you have a lot of mail but don't always remember to jot down addresses or add them to your address book.

Overall what complaints I have had have been minor and the value is great. Right now they're the only game in town for a full capability free Email if you don't have a freenet around. Their only competitor, Freemark discontinued operations on December 1st of 1996. All the others (HotMail, etc.) require you to have existing internet access through someone else to use them.



This is our friend Bill, who is either showing his real face (something that would explain his policy regarding Aliens) or has been unwittingly part of a demonstration of the **GOO** Program at Mike Steinbergs Studio, on March 21st.

A NEW QL EMULATOR FOR THE MAC

There is now a new and faster Q-emuLator's version for 68K Macs!

Q-emuLator 3.0 is about twice as fast as the previous 68K version (1.x), thanks to a complete rewrite in machine language of the QL processor emulation core. Q-emuLator 3.0 is about twice as fast as a QL on a 33MHz 68040 Mac, but requires 8M of RAM.

There is also a new Q-emuLator Lite version available on the Q-emuLator's Web Page (<http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Heights/1296/q-emulator.html>), slightly faster than previous Lite versions.

These are the current Q-emuLator's prices:
(NB prices are in Lira)

Q-emuLator 2.1	
(Power PConly).....	L. 100000
Q-emuLator 3.0	
(68K only, requires 8M RAM)....	L. 100000
Updates.....	L. 60000

(Still available is version 1.1 for the 68K, requiring just 4M RAM but half as fast as 3.0, selling for L.65000.) Contact Daniele Terdina by e-mail at sistest@ictp.trieste.it

Ramtop

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GREG'S TECH TIPS

Learning to solder is not that hard. The biggest things to remember are:

- 1- Keep the tip **CLEAN!** Wipe it on a damp sponge or cloth often.
- 2- Don't use too much or too little heat. It is easy to tell by just observing your work. If the solder takes a long time to melt or "gobs" it is not hot enough. If traces are lifting or there is a **LOT** of smoking or there is an obvious burned smell, then it's too **HOT!**
- 3- Use a good rosin core solder. Kestlers is the best. It pays to use a real thick solder for fine work!
- 4- Keep the tip tinned! If it gets dark real fast, it is too hot. In this case, use a very moist cloth or sponge more often.
- 5- Use the right wattage iron or gun for what you are doing. PC board trace soldering requires a low wattage. (15 to 25) Heavy wires or soldering to a chassis or very thick traces require a gun or higher wattage iron. (30 & up)
- 6- Again Remember, keep the work **CLEAN!** Use a thin bristle wire brush to clean traces and a very fine emery cloth to clean points on metal to solder. (including wire)

Here's the secret: Clean the trace and the lead of the component. Insert the lead and bend it enough that it won't fall out. Apply the iron tip (tin it first and wipe it off so you have a shiny tip) to the trace and against the lead. Now apply solder Slowly until it melts entirely around the lead and runs on the trace. Don't apply too much! It helps to start applying on the iron tip to get it to run on the tip and then around the lead and trace. As **SOON** as the solder melts evenly, get it off the surface!

Connectors: Tin both the wire end and the pin first. Don't use excess solder! (if you do, you run the risk of bridging two or more pins) after tinning all the wires and pins, one by one, and try to not jump around but do each pin in some order. Now heat the pin and as soon as the pin is melting, (Not the pin! but the solder!) apply the wire. After the wire joins in, get the heat off! hold it steady and when it's solid, go to the next wire. Remember to clean and re-tin the iron tip a **LOT!**

Introduction to the Pilot

By David Hoshor

I purchased a US Robotics Pilot about three months ago and it's changed the way I work. The Pilot is person organizer about the size of a 3x5 note card, is about 1/2 inch thick and weighs about 5.5 ounces with batteries. It fits neatly in a shirt pocket. The small size makes it easy to take everywhere. The basic device, the Pilot 1000 comes with 128K of memory, and the larger Pilot 5000 comes with 512K of memory. A 1-megabyte cartridge is also available. The device is powered by two AAA batteries that last for weeks.

I hardly know where to start describing the features of the Pilot. Unlike most personal organizers and palm top computers, the Pilot uses only a touch sensitive screen to communicate with the device. The lack of keys makes the Pilot look especially notepad like. The screen is divided into two main parts; the top 160x160 pixel viewing screen and the bottom character recognition area. The character recognition area is further divided into an alphabetic input and numeric input area. You communicate with the device by means of the Graffiti alphabet, a stylized alphabet that is easy to learn. The Pilot recognizes one Graffiti character at a time, and doesn't try to interpret whole words of script like the Newton does. You know when you make a mistake entering characters, because you see the letters instantly. US Robotics claims that an experienced user can enter thirty words a minute with Graffiti. I believe that is a realistic figure for careful data entry.

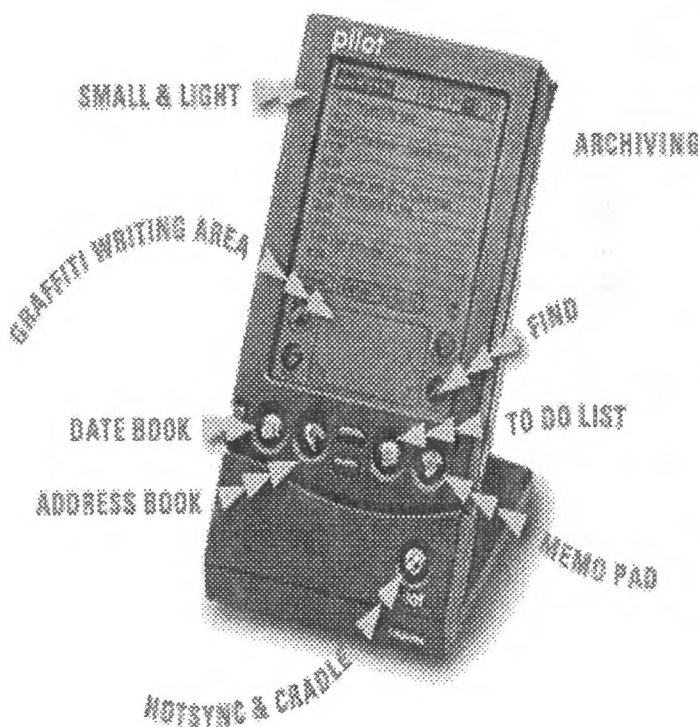
Another thing that makes the Pilot so useful is the software that comes with it and the firmware built into the unit. There are four major applications that come with the Pilot; an address book, a date book, a to-do list, and a memo pad. These applications live in the firmware of the device. The Pilot also has a serial port built into it so that you can synchronize the data contained in the Pilot with the your PC, or you can do data entry on the PC and send the data to your Pilot. All the necessary hardware and software come with the Pilot. It takes only a few seconds to synchronize the date with the PC.

US Robotics has done a very good job of keeping the applications simple, yet useful. The address book program can store hundreds of names, with titles, company names, and at least five built in number fields; business, home, fax, pager, mobile, e-mail, other and

main selections. These descriptions are available with a small drop-down menu. Four custom fields are attached to each address, so you can assign names like "key", "hours", "web", "family members", "birthday" etc. You can also attach notes to the addresses. Only fields that are filled in show on the screen, so the display doesn't look cluttered. You can also create

categories for the addresses, so that you can classify them by any criteria you want. The addresses can be classified in up to fifteen custom categories. With the use of the PC based software, the data can be exported as .dbf, comma separated values, or tab delimited files for use in other programs. The PC based software also lets you print out your memos, calendars, addresses, etc.

The calendar programs lets you schedule events, and add notes and alarms to events. I use the calendar as a way of keeping track of the things I do during day as



well as scheduling events in the future. You can schedule recurring events easily with the calendar program, so that you schedule a meeting on the second and fourth Fridays of each month, or on the 27th of each month.

The memo pad application is one of my favorites. You can store hundreds of short memos, limited to about 5000 characters each. Like the address book, the memos can be categorized in up to fifteen custom categories. I find the memo pad useful for recording procedures that I do at work, lists of modem pool numbers, etc. For me, it's a very useful program.

Finally, there's the to-do program. It lets you create lists of things to do. The items can be prioritized with a priority number, or by due date. A little check box appears by each item so you can check the item off as it is completed. I don't use this program as frequently as the other programs, but find it useful as a reminder of things I should be working on when I get free time.

One feature that helps pull all the programs together is the "find" function. You can enter a word or portion on a word and search all the data contained in the Pilot. A list of matching items appears for you to choose from.

Quite a few people are writing software for the Pilot. If you get on the Internet and do a search for on "pilot", you'll see quite a few sites, and a number of applications, games, development kits, BASIC interpreters, etc. It reminds me of the early days of the Sinclair ZX-81. Many of the programs are free ware or low cost shareware. The programs are loaded into the Pilot from your PC with the synchronization software supplied with the Pilot.

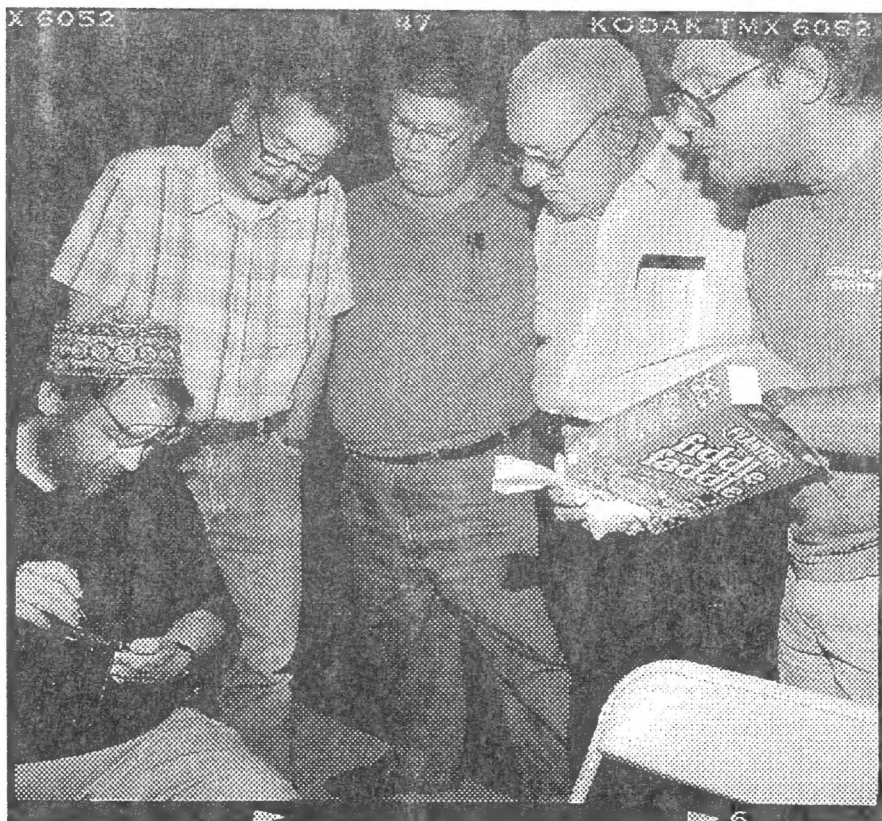
In the last month, US Robotics has released a new version the Pilot. It incorporates enhancements to the firmware applications and adds a back light to the screen. The new models are priced at \$300 for the "Personal" model, and \$400 for the "Professional". US Robotics offers an upgrade to the current Pilot that gives you all the features of the "Professional" model, except the back light, for \$100. My upgrade is on order. The new features include an expense tracker, an Internet mail client, and numerous minor enhancements to the other programs.



The Graffiti script used on both the Newton and Pilot.

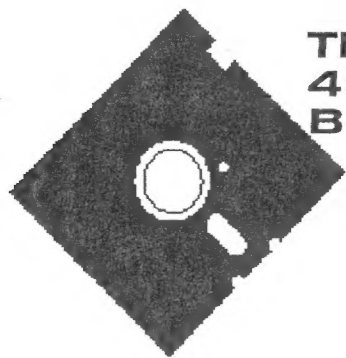
KNUTE ROCKNE SPEAKS TO THE USER GROUP

This issue has something(almost) for everyone. On the cover is a picture of a young Sir Clive, inside are a couple of articles by Greg Dupuy, Dave Hoshor and Ron Hopkins-Lutz. Ron was kind enough also to demonstrate the Newton at a meeting last year. Our newsletter is only going to be as good as the information you provide and the same applies to meetings. If you want better meetings and a better newsletter, you have to participate. Everyone has something to contribute. So enough of the pep talk and lets win one for Clive.



Part one of the Dueling Palmtops

Ron Hopkins-Lutz demonstrates his Apple Newton last November to Jon Kaczor, Greg Dupuy, Neil Elias and Toby Radloff who watch with intense concentration. This particular photo was slightly manipulated with Photoshop 4 during a demonstration at Mike Steinberg's photo studio March 21. We would like to thank Mike (an honorary Sinclair user) for that entertaining demonstration on his Power PC. If you have any ideas for an upcoming meeting please call Greg Dupuy.



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